

LOUISE SWESEY SCHMIDT: MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD IN GERLACH AREA, 1910-1916

Interviewee: Louise Swesey Schmidt

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Description

Louise Schmidt was born in Troy, Montana, on December 15, 1905; and at the age of six months she moved to Fallon, Nevada, with her parents, Alfred and Nellie Swesey, and her half brother, "Koot" Bronson. In 1910, after four years of homesteading in Fallon, the family, which by then included a younger brother, Alfred, moved to Gerlach, Nevada. For the next six years the family resided approximately thirteen miles southeast of Gerlach in an area known as the Gypsum Mine.

Upon leaving Gerlach in 1916 the family located in Reno, where Mrs. Schmidt attended public school, graduating from Reno High School in 1922. Then followed employment as a stenographer for seven years with the First National Bank of Reno. She and her husband, Roy B. Schmidt, have resided in Reno since their 1928 marriage. Since 1934 she has been actively engaged as a housewife, mother and grandmother.

Mrs. Schmidt presents memories of life in the Gerlach area. She recalls her father's activities while he was employed by the Pacific Portland Cement Company. She describes neighbors, friends, and life in an isolated, rural setting.

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NELLIE DROES PRODUCED THIS ORAL HISTORY AS A STUDENT IN THE
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FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA MEDICAL SCHOOL, RENO.

An Oral History Conducted by by Nellie Dries

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

Louise Schmidt was born in Troy, Montana on December 15, 1905; and at the age of six months she moved to Fallon, Nevada with her parents Alfred and Nellie Swesey, and her half brother "Koot" Bronson. In 1910 after four years of homesteading in Fallon, the family which then included a younger brother, Alfred, moved to Gerlach, Nevada. For the next six years the family resided approximately 13 miles southeast of Gerlach in an area known as the Gypsum Mine.

Upon leaving Gerlach in 1916 the family located in Reno where Mrs. Schmidt attended public school, graduating from Reno High School in 1922. Then followed employment as a stenographer for seven years with The First National Bank of Reno. She with her husband, Roy B. Schmidt, has resided in Reno since her marriage in 1928. Since 1934 she been actively engaged as a housewife, mother and grandmother.

Recorded in these interviews are her memories of life while living in the Gerlach area. She recalls her father's activities while employed by the Pacific Portland Cement Co.;

life in an isolated rural setting; neighbors and friends; and the grief of her parents over the disappearance of her half brother "Koot".

When invited to participate, she accepted modestly, although she expressed doubts and concerns regarding the significance of her contribution. During the interviews which were held June 27, 28 and July 7, 1977 she responded readily and sincerely.

The Oral History Project of the University of Nevada, Reno, Library preserves the past and present for future research by recording the reminiscences of persons who have figured prominently in the development of Nevada and the West. Scripts resulting from interview are deposited in the Special Collections department of the University Libraries at Reno and Las Vegas. Mrs. Schmidt has generously assigned her literary rights in the oral history to the University of Nevada, Reno and has designated her script as open for research.

Nellie Droes
University of Nevada, Reno
July 1977

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Louise Swesey Schmidt: My mother [Ellen Mary Downey] was born in Detroit, Michigan April 23rd, 1871; an' her mother [Johanna Whalen] was born in Dublin, Ireland; and her father [Maurice Downey] was born in Tralee. And now what else do I want to say? My father [Alfred Charles Swesey] was born in Osceola, Wisconsin February 14, 1872. His mother was Welsh and his father was Pennsylvania Dutch.

I don't know too much about my Grandparents. Grandma, she left Dublin and it was three months on a sailing vessel before she landed in New Orleans. They were what do you call it? not marooned, but whatever it is—when the wind quits—in the sailing boat for three weeks. They'd sit out on deck and hold their frying pans over their head for a umbrella because it was so warm.

Nellie Drees: What did Grandma Swesey say about the reason for leaving Ireland?

To come to America, because America was the acme of anything that anybody wanted. America to the people over there—they saved

every cent they could and everything they could do to go to America. Then when they get to America they find out that it's nothin' but hard work, same as it was over there.

Did they leave because of famine or political conditions?

Well, at one time I remember Mother talking about her mother saying that, you know, in the year of the Black Potatoes in Ireland. Her folks were fishermen so they had fish to eat, but there was lots of beggars around and everything. And her father would stand at the head of the table with a shillelagh and make his kids eat [voice choked] Because he said his first... was to look out for his youngsters and then if there was anything left over they could give it to the beggars—I heard Mother tell this.

So they actually stayed in Ireland during the famine?

Oh, yes!

It wasn't because of the famine that they left?

No, well America was pulling all the young folks in those days.

How old were they when they left?

I don't know how old Grandma was. She couldn't have been very old, sixteen, eighteen, somewhere around in there. And Grandpa I don't know. They got married in Detroit.

Did they know each other beforehand?

No, she met him here in America in Detroit. Because all the girls knew in those days was to go to work in a kitchen, you know, to be a servant in somebody's house and that's what she and her friend got a job workin' in a kitchen. I mean cooking and whatever girls did in a kitchen in those days, among the affluent people.

[Where was Grandpa Downey from and how did he get to this country?] He was born in Tralee, and how he got to this country, I just don't know. He must have come on a sailboat too— a sailing vessel— because that's the only way they had o' comin'.

Let's see, my mother was the youngest of seven children and she was the only girl. My father's family also had seven children, but he had three sisters and three brothers.

Well, when I was a youngster my mother's brothers were with us a good share of the time and Uncle Maurice [Maurice Downey] and Uncle Jerry [Jeremiah Downey] were, well, very much in my childhood. In fact Uncle Jerry he was next to my mother in the family. Whenever there was any problems or any family catastrophes of any kind, and he didn't happen to be around, why, he was sent for immediately. "You always send for Jerry."

[Can I think of a catastrophe?] Well, I can think of—oh, when my half brother [Maurice

Downey Bronson, born August 31, 1895] was lost. Went hunting one day [February 17, 1913] and never came home. So, Jerry was down to a mine by Tonopah. And in those days when you wired to anybody you had to send a wire and then put up a dollar a mile for somebody to take the telegram to wherever it was suppose to go. And they just went by horseback out of Mina—you could wire to Mina— and they went by horseback and delivered the telegram. Then he came in and came up there and they—all the people around there—the cowpunchers, and the sheepherders, and the people from Gerlach, and everything went out looking. But it was eight years before we knew what happened to him.

[What did my Uncle Jerry look like?] Well, my Uncle Jerry was a very small man; my mother was a small woman. His brothers were all average size men, but Jerry was only about five foot one, I think or something like that, and rather slight built. But he was a tough little guy; and he did a lot of hard work in his life; and he followed mining.

He used to be a cook in the mining camps. In fact that's what all my uncles did mostly, was follow mining. My Uncle Maurice was generally foreman of some kind or sorta ran the mines. [Why was Jerry a cook?] Well, I guess, because in those days if you were a cook you cooked. [Laughter] Nobody wanted the job and I guess he kinda liked it. He liked to make sourdough hotcakes, and bread, and things. Of course, it was under the most primitive of conditions that they worked—in tents and just on wood stoves. So, if you were a good cook, you could always have a job. Well Jerry had an awful lot of stories, and right now, just 'cause somebody wants me to remember 'em, I can't. I can't remember them very good.

Well, I know my Uncle Jerry was always buying big cars in those days, and I don't know how many trips he made between Reno and Tonopah. He never went the right way once or

the same way twice. In those days, of course, there was no highways or signs or anything. You'd just come to a crossroads and went the way you felt like going. He generally got on the wrong road.

[About what period would that have been?] Oh land, you never—I guess between 1910, 1925 somewhere around there.

He would drive to Tonopah?

Oh yeah, over those ol' dusty dusty roads, well, go out to all these mines.

In his own car?

Yeah, he'd have a car of his own. He always was buyin' a great big car, you know, big ol' Dodge or somethin'. Of course, the cars were somethin' in those days. They were not dependable.

[What other ways were there to get to the mining camps?] Well, teams, in those days there was still teams. In the early days and in, oh, 1910, 1915, '16, '17, in there; there were still horses, and wagons, and things going. Especially out on the, you know, the bad roads. There wasn't any good roads, but some of 'em were worse than others. [How would I describe a good road?] Well, you know, they weren't graded or anything. You just went down in a canyon and up the sharp hill and around the rocks, or around the brush.

[How would I describe Uncle Maurice?] Well, Maurice was very well read. He studied a lot and read a lot a history and everything. I just wish now, I'd listened to the tales he had to tell, because they were authentic.

He was in New Mexico in the early days when the Comanche Indians were on the warpath. The Indians would surround the water holes in the desert. Then if you were traveling, you didn't go or make a water hole; you made a dry camp. I remember him telling that at one time that all he had was a tortilla

and his pony, and they had no water. They had to rest so, I guess, he just laid down on the ground and the pony stood there. He gave him the tortilla 'cause he didn't have anything else for it. Well, I guess it's hot and dry, you don't care too much about eatin', but anyhow, he gave the pony the tortilla. He must have survived it because he lived to be well up in his seventies.

[Was he in New Mexico for mining?] Yeah, They were always mining. You know, that's the reason I don't have too much faith in mines 'cause we were always going to be rich, and we never got rich. I was always going to have a pony when the mine paid off, but I never got my pony. Jerry and Maurice they'd promise me I was going to have a pony.

[What kind of minerals were they mining?] Well, I guess, mostly silver... Lead and silver I think they were mining most of the time. I think they had some copper down there by Tonopah in what they called the Rosalee.

[Would Maurice and Jerry go into partners together or did they go to work for someone else?] Well, generally, in those days they worked for somebody else, but sometimes you were grubstaked by somebody. Somebody would have a mine or knew where there was a ledge or somethin'. Then somebody would put up the money and the tools; and you'd go out and work on the ledge, and that's the way they did lots of the time.

[What would a ledge be?] Well a ledge is somethin' where the mineral should be, hopefully, and then you follow it through the mountains—or through the hill rather.

In those days everything was done by hand. You'd blast and dig out rock, it wasn't like it is now, you know, where everything was big machinery. Getting a road into a mine was a terrible job in those days. Everybody had a mine that would pay a lot of money if they could get a road in there.

LIFE NEAR GERLACH: 1910-1916

My father had teams. He had eight horses, and that's how come he went up on to Gerlach on the Western Pacific to work with the horses building—grading the grades that they put the railroad on. They were building the Western Pacific into Winnemucca and east, down the Feather River. But he worked between Winnemucca, and well, east of Gerlach to what they called Sand Springs. I guess it would be east, no, it would be west of Gerlach to what they called Sand Springs. And that's the way those railroad things were built in those days.

See, the Southern Pacific was already through here [Reno area] and I guess, the Western Pacific had to take the Feather River Route—I think there was a little finagling going on there. And they [Western Pacific Railroad] went down the Feather River and then out through Gerlach to Winnemucca. When they got to Winnemucca, then they paralleled the Southern Pacific there for a long ways east. The W. P. never really came in here to Reno. When we first came to Reno [1916] they had a narrow gauge they called the N. C. & O., the Nevada, California, and

Oregon Railroad, that came in from Chilcoot where the Western Pacific is. It was a narrow gauge and then they made it into this wide gauge here [gesturing to W.P. tracks adjacent to home].

But the roads were built by hand or by horses an' what they called a Fresno. [Describe a Fresno?] Well, they're a funny looking thing they're just kinda like a big scoop on the end of a, well, like these shovels are on the end of a crane of somethin'. The horses pulled 'em and you held on. They had, I think, little wheels on 'em real low down; and then you tilted this scoop thing up; and the horses pulled it into the dirt and' moved the dirt; and then you pulled on this rope handle and that dumped the dirt. Oh golly, I don't think they'd even move a half of yard at a time, but it was a little faster than shoveling it by hand with a shovel. It seems funny now when you think of it—how much hard work— all those railroads were built that way.

[Were there different sized Fresnos?] I suppose. I remember the one Dad had. It was about, oh, probably three or four—no maybe

not—about four feet wide, I guess. Would that be about four feet across there, [gesturing] about four feet wide and probably eighteen, twenty inches deep. Then you'd push it down into the dirt; and the team would pull it: and then when they got all they could pull then you'd tilt the front end up. Then you'd haul it to wherever you wanted and you dumped it.

[Did just one horse pull 'em?] Oh no, maybe four, maybe six horses on 'em. Oh, they had to because it was, you know, just pulling it through the dirt just like these shovels dig up the hard dirt. Well, the horses were pulling the Fresnos through there and if' it was too hard, I guess they picked it loose as much as they could. It was all just back breaking labor for both man and beast. I think they have four horses most of the time on a Fresno. I imagine they were hooked up two and then two in front of them.

And that's what Dad did in Fallon there for a while too. Because a lot of people came in there homesteading and the land had to be leveled. 'Cause it was just hill and everything. That's what he worked with was teams there doin', but the poor homesteaders didn't have too much money. So he thought he'd go up on the railroad 'cause you were sure of your pay then.

What do you recall about his activities related to the horses?

Of course, he had wagons you know, 'cause you had to. If you went out you had to haul their hay. You also had to haul water out there on the desert. When he worked on the railroad, he use to go into a place called Deep Hole and haul the water out.

I know he had one horse that they'd give 'em water in a tub. Everybody had tubs in those days, galvanized tubs. That's what they'd water the horses in. This one darn horse when

he'd get done drinking; he'd grab a hold of the tub with his teeth and upset it if you didn't watch him. He'd turn the tub over if you didn't grab him and make him quit. You wonder what kind of a mind it was.

You had to take the water, Of course since they built the railroad, well, how would you say, building the railroad ahead of the engine—it kept bringing stuff in too. Because that's the way it was built. It just brought its supplies and then they kept the rails ahead of the engine, building the railroad. And that's how come we went to Gerlach.

Which direction from Gerlach did he work?

Both directions, I think mostly west of Gerlach, as I remember. 'Cause Sand Springs was sort of a landmark on the—boy, this is really goin' into ancient history.

Because we went from Fallon to Gerlach on the first train, the first freight train that went over the Western Pacific. That is we had to go to Hazen and get on the Southern Pacific and then go to Winnemucca. Then we transferred in the middle of the night to the freight train, my mother and my brother and our luggage. We rode in the caboose 'cause that was the only place—the rest were all freight cars. I can remember that my brother and I, they put us to bed in the—caboose in those days had bunks in 'em, 'cause I guess the train crew slept in 'em part of the time. I remember they put my brother and I in this bunk and, of course, we went to sleep. We were in Gerlach the next thing I knew. Of course, my father met us there, my father and my brother, Koot, met us there.

They had already gone ahead?

Yeah, they took— My Dad in the meantime had sold his horses, all but the one mare we

had. And he had taken the buggy and my brother, that is my half brother. He was about thirteen then, I guess, and they drove to Gerlach [from Fallon] with the horse and buggy—ride around Pyramid Lake. That was quite a journey I don't know how long it took 'em. But see, they'd have to, you know, picket the horse out where there would be somethin' for it to eat at night; and then they'd have a little hay and grain. They took the dog with 'em they had the dog with 'em. So they were in Gerlach when we got there. We had a tent and that was in August, and we stayed there until November.

[What do I recall of landing in Gerlach?] Well, I don't remember too much about it, just landing there. I remember the tent, and I remember my poor mother was sick. Now they'd say she had food poisoning, but in those days you were just sick. My father cooked for my brother and myself and my half brother on a hole in the ground with some iron laid across it, and he got our meals. Of course, to us kids, I at least, we were really living, but when I come to think of it, my poor Dad and Mother, they weren't havin' [laughter] such a good time out of it.

[How long did her illness last?] Oh, I don't imagine, of course in those days you didn't have much that you could do for it: but I suppose several days that she felt...

[Did we have the only tent there?] Oh no, as I recall it, Gerlach had some... Well, that's the reason we went to Gerlach was because my Dad thought he would go to Gerlach and build some houses to rent. 'Cause he made a little money up there working on the railroad. They would build some houses and they would have some rentals. But when he got to Gerlach, why, it all belonged to the railroad and you couldn't own the ground. People that lived in Gerlach just built a house wherever they felt like it. Because it was all railroad

ground and nobody owned anything. But Dad didn't want to build there and they were talking some of going to Portola which was one of the division points on the Western Pacific at that time.

And then he got the job, how I don't know, but going up to the Gypsum Mine. He was to go up there and do assessment work on each claim and things. An' they promised they were going to build a house to live in—the Pacific Portland Cement was going to build a house. Well, that was in November of 1910 and it turned out to be a very heavy winter. When we went up to the... they hired a freight team—four horses and the wagons—to haul our stuff an' everything up to the Gypsum there. Then with winter, storms set in an' you couldn't get across Black Rock Desert with anything except, you know, a very light wagon. Well, very light, in fact, just the buggy was about all the horse could do to pull through the mud. So there we were, up there and we didn't have a house until the next spring when things dried up so they could get stuff in there.

Then they sent the lumber and all the things to build the house, and my father built the house. It was a nice house. It had a front room and a kitchen and two bedrooms with a bath between and a front porch and a back porch. It had plumbing in it because they were developing the spring back of the house there, and you were suppose to use the water in order to claim it; and so that's what they were doing. We had a regular bathroom. In those days, you know, bathrooms weren't like they are now, you know. Everybody had a telephone booth out in the back yard, and you took a bath in the washtub along side the kitchen stove. But this house had a regular bathroom with a toilet and a washbowl and a bathtub. It had a sink in the kitchen and it had hot and cold running water. It was a very nice house, if you had a house like that,

here now, you'd really have somethin'. But it wasn't plastered; it was finished with flooring, matched tongue and groove flooring. That was the inside wall finish. Of course, they sent everything. Everything came in kind of a package deal, an' they had 'Inside Paint'. I can remember my mother, "What color is the paint going to be?" So she takes a nail and drives it in the paint can and sticks a broom straw down in, an' it was pink. Mother was really mad! "Pink! My God!" It was going to be pink and that is what it was. It was pink. [Laughter]

I can remember having Christmas in the tent in Gerlach before they started to build the house. Oh, we had a tree. Of course, to us time and to my brother and I, time didn't mean anything. But evidently, Jerry had sent—'cause he wasn't there at that time—he didn't come until after January, but he had sent a box, a Christmas box, evidently it didn't come until later on. I can't remember what we had at Christmas time, 'cause I was only five years old so you don't remember an awful lot of things like that.

But I can remember the tree in the corner of the tent. The tent was ten by fourteen so we didn't have a heck of a lot of room.

What kind of a tree would it have been?

Juniper. Juniper is all that you had and, of course, you have to look for Junipers. 'Cause they're kind of a bushy, squatty tree. So if you wanted one that was a little bit pointed like a Christmas tree—they seemed large to us, but they use to turn it up on an apple box.

Of course, we didn't have lights only just candles, and us kids couldn't have the candles lit unless my older brother or an adult was around. I can remember they were very, very, careful because fire was such a hazard. But

the candles were pretty, and we would have them lit in the tent and even afterwards when we lived in the house. Of course things were better there, but even then you had to be very careful because fire is a threat no matter where you are. When you're out where there is nothing to control it, why, you just take precautions and you don't let it catch on fire.

Though, I do remember that summer before the house was built we were still living in the tent and my brother, I'll call him Koot, he was about nine years older than I was. All the little canyons when the snow was melting was full of water, running, muddy, running water. He would take milk cans and cut 'em some way or other and make waterwheels out of them, and set them across these little gullies. Of course, they'd spin in the water, and we thought that was real fun.

Then there was an' old stove. Us kids were playing house or something around this old stove. Well, to make a long story short, my dress caught on fire, but it really didn't blaze up or anything; it was just kind of smoldering. Of course, when Mother and Dad and my brother Koot saw this, they just really went into orbit. Ever after that, we never could touch matches or anything. And I can remember, I couldn't see why they were so excited—it didn't burn the dress very much! [Laughter] Looking back on it, no wonder they were in orbit!

[Was the stove out of the house?] Yeah, this stove was out. It was a sheet iron camp stove. They were kinda just a box with a hole for a chimney. They pack them on pack mules. The sheepherders used to have them with their donkey. They'd put them inside the tent and things. This was an old one that just, oh, kind of sitting out there. I guess somebody had dumped it off or something. But it had a chimney and you'd build a fire in it and the smoke went out the chimney. Well, I guess,

kid like, we didn't watch what we were doing, and the fire caught my dress, which could have been a real tragedy. But it wasn't so, so that was the way it was then.

* * * * *

Of course, then they sent a diamond drill crew up there before the house was finished. A diamond drill is a, well, a machine that drills with a hollow pipe-like and the diamonds are set in the inside of the pipe, an' then it goes down in the ground. Just kind of turns around an' cuts out rock or whatever. The reason it's called a diamond drill is 'cause they use these black diamonds for the cutting edge.

Eight men came, and I think they had a tent, if I remember right. I recall they had a tent that the crew slept in. An' the foreman he had this little building that they built, a little shack about ten by fourteen, ten by twelve, somethin' like that. I suppose he set the diamonds too. He probably was the diamond setter because, I guess they had to set these diamonds p'urty often, you know, drilling down into the hard rock. They set the diamonds, that was what they called it. They were on the inside of this pipe-like thing. I suppose you set 'em at different angles or... They weren't very big, the diamonds. They weren't much bigger than the end of a pencil. They weren't that big as I remember. They were pretty small, but I guess they were black diamonds and that was the reason it was called a diamond drill.

The thing was run by steam, why, it must've been run by steam 'cause I remember the whistle on it. They drilled, oh, probably a mile or so from where the house was or where we lived at the time. I guess, it gave them, geologist or whoever was workin' on it, an idea of how the formation— what layers of formation you went through an what you got.

'Cause I don't know how far they went down, but I know for a long time Mother had a core. Oh, it was about an inch, I guess, in diameter, an' maybe a little more, maybe an inch an' a half; and it was about two feet long. It had come up out of the granite, you know, that this drill had drilled down. So I suppose, it was pretty much like a well drilling machine, the way it worked. It turned this piece of pipe with these diamonds on the inside of it, an' pushed it down through the ground, an' then the core came up through the pipe. They were quite the thing in those days, diamond drill.

Because, I know my Uncle Maurice at one time—they must of used 'em in mines or things too because he set the diamonds. That was considered a, well, not an art exactly, but an accomplishment to be able to set these diamonds in this pipe, so that it would drill these cores out the way they should. I don't think they'd even had gasoline engines. Well, they must have fired it with juniper. That I don't remember. I remember goin' down an' seem' the thing workin'. But you didn't pay too much attention when you're only five years old. [Laughter]

It must have come up with freight teams. I can remember the freight teams comin' bringing the stuff to build the house an' things. So I suppose they hauled up the diamond drill. Because that's the way things were transported in that day.

Somebody'd have, maybe six horses an' a couple of wagons, sometimes more horses than that. I think if they had more horses, yeah, I think if they had ten horses, they had what they called a jerk line. A man rode the left wheeler, the one that was against the wagon. The horses in the lead had a pole between 'em. They just had a line on one horse, an then it was called a jerk line. An' I guess, he guided the horse with that, an' he'd the horse

push the other horse over when they turned or anything. Then right at the end of the tongue on the wagon they had what they called the pointers. They had a chain that went out that the other horses were fastened to pull this load with. The pointers when they'd go around a tight turn, they'd stop the team, well, let's see, I guess,—How would that be? [Gesturing] The horse that was on the inside of the curve would step over the chain an' pull the wagon, you know, at an angle. Because, well, horses strung out for ten horses is quite a long thing, An' these roads were narrow an' crooked as could be. Some of' these teams were very well trained; they'd get over this chain without... An' that's the way they used to haul all this stuff' up then. That covers a lot of' years that you don't remember too much about.

One of the poor guys after the drill was working got his hand caught in the shift. Of course, all these things were to my brother and I, you know, were kind of' a Roman holiday because there would be a lot of excitement and everything and there wasn't too much excitement around. But the poor devil, I don't know, he lost three or four fingers on one hand. My mother had to dress it, and my father had to hitch up the horse an' buggy an go posthaste to Gerlach. Then the poor guy had to go on the train to Winnemucca, the nearest doctor, which I guess was a hundred miles or better.

How long did that take?

Well, I don't know. With a horse an' buggy I think maybe you go four miles an hour. Because it wasn't what you'd call a paved highway, it was up and down hills and in and out of canyons and just a dirt road. So, at least it took three or four hours to get to Gerlach, and then of course they'd have to wait for the next freight or the next passenger train. There

was lots of passenger trains in those days. But anyhow, you'd have to wait for that so, I don't know how long the poor man was before he got to a doctor. But I can remember that.

Do you recall the dressing of his hand?

Well, all I know, I imagine, she must have bandaged it; it was probably bleeding an' everything. An' then I think they put it in flour to sort of form a crust or help it to stop bleeding. I don't know, that's all they had to do with. They didn't have anything else to—whether they put a tourniquet on his arm or what, I don't remember. I don't remember that part.

Then, of course, that was that summer an' poor Mother, the house wasn't even finished, an' all she had was a cookstove. She didn't even have a range, just a little cookstove with two doors on it—the oven doors—to cook for eight men an' my father an' us two kids. That'd be what?—about twelve people. Make bread, an roast, an' everything. Then they were boardin' the diamond drill crew so they'd get meat out from Winnemucca. They get it from Winnemucca, an' it'd come in on the railroad, and Dad would go an' get it. An' the time that Riordan got hurt an' got his hand hurt an' everything. Oh, one of the guys, he liked the roast meat my mother made. Of course, she was workin' on poor Mr. Riordan bleedin' to death. Cully Ohman, he says, "Well he was sorry for Riordan, but he burned, Mother burned the roast, an' that was a sadder thing than his hand. gettin' chopped up!" [Laughter]

An' poor Cully Ohman, he was a crack shot. In the evening when they were just foolin' around they'd shoot at tin cans an' everything. He could just riddle a can, They'd throw it in the air, an' he'd riddle a can before it'd hit the ground. After they left there, he went down

to Sacramento an' I guess, got drunk, an' got into a fight, an' killed somebody— an' hung himself. [Voice drops] You know,...kinda tragic. But we use to think he was marvelous, cause they'd go out there an' throw up these cans an' —he was just a crack shot. See, too darn good a shot, I guess an

An' I can remember these guys'd go huntin', an' they'd bring home little cottontail rabbits. Mother said she'd cook 'em, cook the rabbits for 'em if they'd skin an' clean 'em. So they would, an' then we'd have rabbit. But Gee! On just a little ol' cookstove, you can't imagine how little the cookstove was. Well, it's bigger than this thing we got down here in the basement, you know. [Referring to a box stove approximately 15 inches by 24 inches] It had four little holes an' then the oven door opened on each side of the oven. It couldn't have been very big to make bread an' stuff in all the time. [What is the difference between a cookstove and a range?] Well, a range is bigger an' has a bigger oven, and the firebox is kinda to one side of the stove. Then it has a big oven; an' the heat goes underneath the oven an' over the top of the oven. But these little things, you just had the firebox in the front an' the little oven. Of course, one side was always hotter than the other. You had to keep turning things around. Well, it was a real engineering feat to cook on it. 'Cause you. fired with wood, an' if you got too much wood you burned everything an' if you didn't get enough it didn't get cooked'd.

Well see, that's the way you spent all your time You wonder what you did for amusement. About the time you got through [laughter] goin' through all this, you were ready to go to bed. You didn't need any amusement, you'd done it all.

But then after the diamond drill crew left, why, Mother, I can remember bein' very happy the day the diamond crew left—because all

that hard work... An' I think she made some money, I mean, you know, they were boardin' these men, and she was paid so much for their board.

That's the way women did in those days. I mean they talk about women workin' an' everything, well women have worked all the time. But they didn't have... They could take in washing, or they could keep boarders, or they could sew.

[After the crew left what did Grandpa do with the shack?] Well, he made it over into what we called the blacksmith shop. You know, put a forge in it. Because then, well, all these things had to be done by somebody. You just didn't take it down to the garage an' have it done. You did it yourself or it didn't get done. Wheels on wagons an' buggies an' things were steel or iron or whatever they were made out of. They would get loose, then you'd have to, well, they'd heat em in the forge an' cut 'em. Dad made a thing out of a top of a coal oil can—or not a coal oil can—but a coffee can, a kind of little wheel deal. You'd measure around the wheel so many times. This thing'd turn around an' make a mark. Then you'd measure around the tire. An' you'd have to shrink the tire so it'd fit on the wheel. They'd throw it over the wheel hot an' throw water on it; an' it would shrink it on the wheel. I don't think anybody knows how to do that anymore. That was a lost art when the wagons went. [From what were tires made?] Steel or iron or whatever it was made out of. Of course, it was heated in the forge an' it would expand. They'd cut it so it was just a little bit smaller than the wooden wheel it was to go on. An' quick like, you'd chuck it down over the top of this wheel an' throw water on it an' shrink it on there.

It was the, well, let's see—would you say—the oakies that had stuff, oh, like wooden pieces of wood or somethin' stuck between the

tire and the wheel to hold the tire on. They were a lower grade of humanity, especially around my Dad, because that was his trade, a blacksmith, to do these things. [Where did he learn to be a blacksmith?] I suppose he picked it up from just grim necessity; that's what he did up in Montana. He was a blacksmith an' had the livery stable up there. You know, shoe horses, an' strake tires on wagons, that's what he did. That, I think, is just a lost art now. Nobody, well, there's no reason why you would be doin' it, but I don't think anybody would know how to do it. I suppose people that didn't know how to do it would come to the blacksmith shop an' have it done. But of course out there, there wasn't, you know, he was just doin' it on our buggies. I remember him doin' that.

I remember him runnin' the forge. You had to pump like the dickens to get the coal, oh, white hot. An' of course, some forges were, you know, had big bellows on 'em; but we just had a little thing that had a handle on it sorta like a... You just really had to—sometimes us kids'd do that. 'Cause we weren't very big, Mother would do it, while he was, you know, fixing the tire. But I guess, up in Montana, why, he had a regular big forge with a big bellows that you could really pump and get it hot. An' of course, sharpenin' steel to dig with an' you know, sharpening picks, all that was just average day business. Then they drilled in the tunnels with a hand drill an' a hammer, a jack hammer—not a jack hammer but a single jack. A hammer that they'd pound on these drills with, an' these drills'd have to be sharpened. They'd throw them in the forge an' get them red hot, then pound 'em out on the anvil, cool 'em down. Then temperin' them was a well, that was the last word. You'd poke it in the water an' when it—I never did know just how you did it—but then they'd get a certain blue color then they were tempered enough.

Then you throw'd 'em to one side 'til they got cold. That's another thing to get somebody that could sharpen a pick nowadays. Then they were all part of livin', you know.

* * * * *

And I can remember when Seven Troughs—Seven Troughs was over by Lovelock. It was sorta back of the mountain in the direction from where we were. Oh, it got black, you know, thunderstorm comin' up, just black. Lightning and everything and terribly black off in that direction. [Gesturing toward the east] It started to pour right at the house, and my father was workin' up on the side of a hill in a cut. He was makin' a cut into a spring to develop the spring so they could get more water out of it. Mother looked up there and says, "Al Swesey hasn't got sense enough to come in out of the rain?" We were just being drowned. She, when he did come home, says, "Well Al! Why didn't you come in out of the rain?" He said, "Well it wasn't raining up there. I could see it raining down here, but it wasn't raining up where I was." But anyhow, that was the day they had the big flood at Seven Troughs. I don't know how many people were killed. Seven Troughs was a mine, I guess, at the mouth of' the canyon. It just came down and swept everybody.

But in those days, you know, you didn't have radio; you didn't have anything like that. It was weeks before we knew anything about Seven Troughs. It just had to come by the grapevine. Some rider be comin' through and say, "Well they had a flood over in.... and so many people were killed." Could be a couple, three week after it had happened.

Sometimes looking back I think my folks were lucky. 'Cause Dad would go into Gerlach on Saturday to get the mail, and do what shopping and things they had to get.

The papers would all be in a heap for the whole week, and then he would bring them home. Mother and Dad would sit down in the evening and start on the oldest one an' read through the news. All the terrible things that had happened in the meantime were a week old by the time they got it, and maybe older than that. Now, troubles are dumped in your lap every five minutes!

[What was the reaction to the drownings at Seven Troughs?] Well, see some of the folks my father knew. I don't know that Mother knew... I can't remember their name, Rigiloff [maybe spelled Rigglean] or something like that. My father knew one of the ladies that was drowned, and I think her children with her. It was a real tragedy, 'cause there was quite a few people that were killed in that cloudburst. They happened; we were right up in the mountains and these things would happen every year practically. Some years they'd be worse than others. They'd wash out a road that had been built an' you wouldn't have any road.

'Cause I remember, one time Uncle Jerry went to town, and he had the horse and buggy. He had to cross this little canyon thing coming back. Oh, the roar of the water coming down the canyon was terrific. Mother rushed down there to tell him not to try and cross this little creek, that the thing had washed out. He couldn't hear her, and he's on one side and she's on the other. He couldn't hear her, and she couldn't hear him. They were just a waving their arms and pointin' up the canyon and shakin' their head and everything else.

But when you lived out like that, you know, you were pretty much on your own, for sickness or anything. My brother, Al, used to have the croup so terribly. Nowadays, I think he was kind of allergic to some things. He would get croup, an' you think he was just goin'—well, just die that was all! [What were

the episodes like?] Well, you can make— some people can make a noise like somebody that's got the croup is breathing, but I can't do it. It's a terrible sound. Yes, it's sort of a crowing noise. You can't get your breath an' they just, well, they just, I guess are choking. I don't know just exactly what it does, but Mother used to give him syrup of squills and make him onion syrup.

As far as I know the syrup of squills she got through a drug store. Now, I don't know, she must've sent to Winnemucca—Mother must have sent to Winnemucca for it. We used to get some things like drugs and things out of Winnemucca. The onion syrup she made herself. I don't know if she put in any sugar or not, but the onions were boiled down 'til they were real glucky. An poor Al had to take 'em. Now, whether that done much good or not, but it was somethin' to do when he was choking.

I don't know, I guess, he lived in spite of all these home remedies and not because of 'em. But when your baby is chokin' to death in the middle of the night you just don't know what to do. They didn't have steam kettles—they didn't know anything about a steam kettle in those days, which would have probably helped him an awful lot.

Because when we lived in Gerlach he had an attack in the middle of the night. There was a lady, her name was Mrs. King and she and her husband ran a saloon, and she was about five by five. There was snow on the ground, but it was moonlight. I don't know how far it was the saloon, maybe a couple of blocks by the way that you'd measure it now. But Mother sent me up to get Mrs. King because her boy had croup when he was little, and maybe she knew something about it. Because Al was so desperately strugglin' for breath.

So I ran up to Mrs. King's and banged on the door in the middle of the night; an' she

came waddlin' down the snowy trail after me. She says, "We'll put some ice in his mouth" In those days women didn't go into saloons. The saloon was the only place there was any ice, so Mother went into the saloon and asked for some ice and packed his throat in ice— put ice in his mouth. Now, whether he survived in spite of it or because of it, I don't know! [Laughter] But I can remember that.

[How often would he have these attacks?] Well, he'd go to bed perfectly healthy an' everything an' then he'd wake up with this awful noise of breathing. I suppose several times during the winter. It'd just frighten you out of your soul and frighten the poor little kid himself. [Did they occur more in the wintertime?] Yeah, seemed to, Yes. They called it croup in those days, I don't know what they'd call it now. It seems like some kids have it and some kids don't. I never had it. He'd be pretty sick, I mean he wouldn't feel much like playin' or anything. Did he have a fever? Well, I don't remember. I know Mother'd keep him in bed and he didn't have much pep or anything. Well, nobody knew anything about a fever then, nobody had a thermometer or anything like that. You just—well he feels kind of hot.

Well, that is what you were up against. Of course, Mother was—out in that direction—was the only woman around there. If anybody got hurt or anything, they'd come to our house then she'd be the nurse. When we were out at the mine, of course, in Gerlach, why there were, you know, families lived there.

But one time... It was about four or five miles right over the top of the mountain to Cowles's ranch. A man by the name of a Nick Curnow was there by himself. His horse threw him and stepped on his side, and broke his ribs away from his breast bone. He walked over the mountain to our place: and I can remember us kids goin' out there; and he was

leaning against a fence post. I said, "Oh, what's a matter with you, Nick?" He said, "I'm hurt! Tell your mother!" So, of course, we went yellin' into Mother, "Somebody's hurt. Mr. Curnow's hurt!" She got him into the house an' said, "Go get your father." Dad was about, oh, I guess, a couple of miles working in a... So, you know, we were as important as could be. We were savin' the nation. We ran all the way down there an' yelled at Dad, "Mr. Curnow's hurt! Come quick: Mr. Curnow's hurt! Come quick!"

Well, people walked in those days so Dad had to hike back an' so did we, running along puffin' behind him. Poor Nick Curnow was too sick to move. Dad says, "I'm goin' into to Gerlach and send for the doctor." They had to wire to Winnemucca for Doctor Sweezy. I heard my folks talkin' about it, when they sent for a doctor in those days he had to come whether he wanted to or not, because he was the county doctor. It wasn't a case of whether you wanted to; he was sent for and that was it. He came, and Dad waited in Gerlach and brought him out.

I don't know what he did for Nick—taped him up, I guess, some how or other. You didn't have a cast or anything to put him in. Looking back on it, I suppose it's because he wasn't moved or anything, but he sorta developed pneumonia. You know, I mean, because I can remember my mother bein' up in the night. Of course, we weren't allowed to go in the room he was in. Kids weren't allowed to do a lot of things in those days. But you could hear him coughin' and my mother and dad would be up with the lamp in the middle of the night taking care of him. Guess he was tough, because he lived a long time after that.

Lookin' back on it, I don't know how old a man Nick was. You know, they all seemed old to us, but I don't think he was such an

old man, maybe in his forties. But that was Gerlach in those days.

Do you recall how your father made the assessment that he was too sick to move?

I wouldn't know. Mother often said afterwards that these bones, three ribs, were stickin' right up from his breast bone, you know. No, I didn't see it or anything, you know. Was the skin punctured?] I suppose it probably could have been, I don't know how come Dad... But the poor man had walked up this mountain and down again. Well, just dragged himself, really, 'cause he couldn't get on the horse. But that was life in the Far West, I can tell you that.

* * * * *

Well in those days everything had to be done by the mother of the house. There wasn't anything; you couldn't buy bread. We were too far from any—bread had to be made. Anything you had for supper you had to make, or dinner, or lunch. The washing had to all be done by hand on a washboard. With two little small youngsters it was no mean task and if there was anything extra like the sick man in the house and everything, why, all that work had to be done. We'd burn wood. We didn't have anything but wood, so Dad had to haul it all in an' saw it up by hand. 'Cause there was no power of any kind to do anything.

An' Mother was a good cook. They ordered groceries out of Sacramento in cases of canned goods. Once a month they would order from Weinstock and Lubin in Sacramento. Always, when they made up the order, they would put in some kind of a little surprise. Sometimes it was a dish an' sometimes it was candy an', oh, just any little thing like that. Of course when Dad would

go to town an' bring out the groceries, us kids were always standing around waitin' 'til they'd open the boxes an' see what they'd sent us for a prize or surprise or whatever you want to call it. At that time they [Weinstock & Lubin Co. were wholesale grocers too. in addition to dry goods]

Wholesale?

Well, what would you call where you bought by the case. You know, you bought a case of corn, you bought a case of peas, or you bought a case of beans or... An' I suppose not everyday, every month you didn't order a case of everything.

An' I suppose that's the reason you got it out of Sacramento. I don't know where else it'd be the closest. 'Cause Winnemucca, I don't believe had, you know, that sort of a facility for shippin' it out. Reno wasn't exactly—see, it wasn't on the Western Pacific then. You know what I mean, in fact it is just on a branch of the Western Pacific now. [Was Reno a major supply source?] No, no, it couldn't have been because, see, the railroad was the Western Pacific an' that's what brought stuff into you, was the railroad. An' Salt Lake, you see, would be a long ways away, so I guess that's the reason we got it out of Sacramento

In those days everything came in wooden boxes, it wasn't cardboard boxes like it was now. Milk came by the case in a wooden box an' well anything, a case of anything was all in nice wooden boxes so you had somethin'. Of course, you got so many wooden boxes that if they split 'em up for kindling and things. Butter came in tubs, the cutest little wooden tubs, ten pounds, or I guess maybe more. But I think they use to get ten pounds of butter in these cute little wooden tubs. If you had 'em now for flower pots you'd think you had somethin'.

What about food preparations?

Well, you had canned things, an' or course bacon and ham. An' In those days ham was so salty that you had to parboil it, because that was the only way it was kept. Bacon, I don't remember being quite so salty, though I suppose it had to be parboiled too—to keep any length of time. Occasionally they would butcher beef over at the Limbo Ranch, an then someone of the cowpunchers over there would come over with a quarter of beef on his horse, an' everybody would be happy. 'Cause fresh meat was a real treat.

You wonder sometimes how people cooked when that's what they had, but it always seemed to me as kids we had plenty to eat. I don't remember ever not having. We didn't have fresh milk an' things like they are now, but we always had all kinds of can milk. Mother was a good cook, an' made puddings an' of course, she made bread and cinnamon rolls and the like.

An' sometimes somebody would come riding by—horseback was about—most of the people that came by would be men on horseback. Once in a great while, somebody would come with a team that was travelin' through. They always—people in those days were always invited to dinner or lunch. We generally had what they called dinner at noontime an' supper in the evening. The main meal was at noon.

Well, of course, we never had ice or anything except in the wintertime when you didn't need it. But Dad built a root house, that's what they called 'em. They were dug into the side of the mountain with a great big heavy roof covered with dirt. Of course, the temperature in there was practically the same the year around. They use to put—Dad raised a garden—potatoes an' carrots and stuff in there. In the summertime, why, you kept the

butter an' things. Like I say, we never had fresh milk so keeping milk wasn't a problem. But any kind of food could be put in where it was cooler.

How was beef kept?

Well, when you keep beef like that, in the daytime you put it in hay or something like that, cover it with hay. Then at night you take it out an' let it out in the air and it gets chilled. Then the next morning, why, you cover it up. Mother had a, oh, kind of bag made out of a sheet, an' they pulled over the top of' it. Quarter of beef isn't so awful big by the time we got done choppin' it up. Then you buried it in hay or straw until nighttime, an' then you let it out again. [What did the straw do?] Well, it just kept it cool, kept it from gettin' heated up in the daytime. Well, keeping meat, keepin' anything in those days was quite a problem 'cause that's the way it was. Ice was an unknown quantity. You only had ice in town that came in on the railroad. Well, even in cities an' things there wasn't electric refrigeration or anything like that. It was all ice an' you didn't have ice with that kind of a... I don't remember that it was.... Of' course, as a youngster you don't pay any attention to that. I suppose Mother had her problems. But food was put, after the dinner an' things, in the root house in the summertime to keep. An' of' course in the wintertime, why, that was no problem to keep cold. It was keepin' warm that was the problem then.

[Did I have responsibilities for food preparation or garden work.] Oh, I remember my mother teaching me to make bread. That I can remember, because a man by the name of' Mack came up there to survey, an' my father was sick, he had a bad cold an he couldn't go with him, so they sent my brother. An' I had to stay home an' make bread. I can

remember bein' as indignant as could be about the situation. But Mother taught me to make bread. I'd stand on a stool an' knead it. I suppose she must have helped because, you know, they made four, five loaves at a time; an' she must have helped knead it. I can remember standin' on the stool an' kneadin' bread. As far as responsibilities are concerned I don't remember much about it. I think my brother an' I did pretty much as we wanted to.

You know, you have a good imagination when you're a kid an' we would go down trails which was takin' us to any far away place that we would think that we wanted to go. It's hard to think nowadays but there was no radio, no TV, no communication with the outside world at all except people that might come by or if you went into town, which was for us a rare occasion.

Dad went once a week, but he only took us occasionally, especially me because I always got sick. An' I can see their point. [Laughter] They left me home! [Can I talk a little bit about bein' sick?] Oh! Heavens! [Laughter] I think I've been sick on every mode of conveyance that you can name. Lots and lots of times I walked part of the way home, because I would get so sick ridin' in the buggy. I'd get out an' walk behind. I can still see the horses heels, how funny they look when they're trottin' along or even walkin'. So, I didn't get to go to town very often.

Once in a great while a car would come up. They would have quite a time because the roads—one spot was real steep. It was just about all an animal could do would be to pull a wagon or buggy up this steep part. Of course, the cars in those days weren't much. They would get stalled there an' whoever was with the car, if there was two or three, they'd have to get out an' push. The little ol' Model T Fords were not very much mountain climbers.

When we were out there, we just had the one horse and the buggy and of course she had to stay in the middle of the road. Most of it was for teams, and of course they walked in the track that the wheels made. So the poor ol' mare, she had to go down the middle where the brush was. She was just one horse.

I do remember, one time, some inspector came up. Now, I suppose he was a government inspector, I don't know what. He seemed like a young man to us; so he couldn't have been very old, because most grown-up people seemed like they were quite old. But he had a new pair of boots, high boots clean up to his knees practically, that laced up. Of course, us kids were intrigued with them 'cause the men around there didn't wear those kind of things. Well, poor guy, these were brand new boots. So Dad showed him everything that he wanted to see—right up over the top of the hill, the hardest way to go. "You better go an' over here's another claim or somethin'" "No!, I think I've seen enough." [Laughter] His feet were killin' him the poor guy.

[Do I remember going to Winnemucca Lake? Yes! Oh, Yes! That was a big event. 'Cause they talked an' talked an' we were goin' down to Winnemucca Lake, an' we were goin' to camp overnight. Dad pitched a tent an' he laid out the bed on the ground for my brother an' for them; an' put a horsehair rope around each bed. An' then we cooked over a campfire, that is Dad cooked over the campfire. My mother, I suppose, was helping. I know us kids weren't much help, us an' the dog— no help period. [Laughter]

An' then they had this boat that leaked like the dickens. You had to bail it, really bail it! An' they went out, rowed out in the boat an' the dog followed us. Because I was in the boat, an' he just became exhausted. An' Dad had to pull him into the boat in order, oh,... he

wouldn't drown. These two men lived there. Well, there must've been a spring right close to where they were. 'Cause they had a garden an' everything. Of' course, Winnemucca Lake was salty or alkaline or whatever. [Were they friends of' my family?] Well, everybody knew everybody. 'Cause I was just trying to think the other day how far it would be to Winnemucca Lake, from where we were. You know, it's hard to remember, must've been twenty-five, thirty miles, I guess. An' that was such a long distance. But occasionally they would come by on horseback. You know, everybody knew who lived up certain canyons an' things, even if you never saw much of each other. That was quite a treat to us because all that water was something new. But I don't imagine it was very deep, Winnemucca Lake. We went out in the boat—rowed the boat; an' the dog had to swim, so it must've been, you know, a couple of feet or three anyway*

Do you recall when your mother was teaching you if you had formal sessions?

Well, I remember she had a table and she sat in the middle it was about, I guess, four or five feet long. Al sat on one end, and I sat on the other, and she sat between us. I guess, they must have sent away an and got some readers. Of course the readers you had in those days were not like Jane and Dick an' them. They were quite fantastic [sarcasm] things. Mother's schooling was not, you know, Mother never had very much formal schooling or a great deal of schooling. But she could read and write an' taught us to add and subtract and multiplication tables. Because they used to have these graded readers. They'd give you the first grade, the second grade, or whatever it was. Anyhow, I could read out of a sixth grade reader when we came down

here to Reno, and then I was put in the sixth grade. Yes, [laughing] that seemed to be the aptitude test.

In a way it was a good life to youngsters—in some ways. But you had no contact with other children except that one year we were in Gerlach. The other times it was just Al and I. You made your own amusement and built your own forts an'...

When we had the corral that Dad kept the horse in, my brother and I were down there foolin' around. She was a gentle animal—it wasn't that, but anyhow, I guess, my brother waved his hat or somethin' and she wheeled and kicked me in the face. I don't ever remember how I got home. I remember laying down on the ground because, I guess, I was knocked out. But the next thing I was up at the house. Cut my chin open and Mother was bathing that, an' I suppose, stickin' me back together. It left a scar on my chin. No wonder it was— [laughter] Oh! Golly!\

What about the cat and the dog on the front porch of you house?

Well, [laughter], shall we go into that? Well, There was just my brother an' I by ourselves, an' strangers never came by -very often. But anyhow we had this pussy cat, an' of course our dog didn't bother it or anything. But it was on the back porch, an' some people came by with a team, and they had a dog. An' the dog come up on the porch, an' the cat, of course, really fuzzed up an' everything. Oh, well, you know how kids are,—”Sic 'em” [laughter] an' the dog sicced 'em. [laughter]

*Photographs of' boating on Winnemucca Lake are in Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno, Library

An' the cat left quite a little bit of things up on the wall, an' across the woodpile an.. [the cat had defecated] Anyhow, the Swesey children were in the doghouse, periods!

Your parents were displeased?

Well, that's putting it mildly [laughter] They really were displeased. It was a mess! [Laughter] I can't imagine why we'd do that, but then that was what we did.

What was your dog's name?

Rowdy. They got him when I was just a little thing. I guess I was only about a year old when they got Rowdy. He lived to be about, well, he lived until after we moved down here, which was about ten years. Then he died; he lost his hearing poor ol' fella.

Then sometimes the officials from the Portland Cement Company would come up, a Mr. Henderson, I can remember that name. They would have a Pierce Arrow which was the last word in transportation. It didn't have much trouble makin' the grade, I guess. They always had a chauffeur with them. He use to, while the men were talkin' business with my rather, why, he would be polishing the automobile up. Us kids would be standing around with our teeth in our mouth watching him because they were such a rare thing—to see these great big cars. You go down to Harolds Harrah's Auto Collection now, an' see a Pierce Arrow an' you think, well, that was what came up there. You know, they were touring cars they weren't sedans like they are now, just open air taxis. An' they would come all the way from San Francisco. I suppose it was quite a journey for them, no paved roads, no anything to go on.

Of course, then it would be up to my mother to put on the dinner for these good

people. I never heard Momma complain. She was an industrious soul. Always kept us kids tidy, an herself tidy, an' the house tidy with all the work she had to do.

Do you suppose it was a social outlet?

Oh, I think anything like that out of the ordinary was a social outlet, you know. Life was kind of pretty much routine. Nobody came, why, you just kept pluggin' away at what you had to do, but if somebody came then you could stop an talk with them. An' of course, talkin' with people was your only outside communication.

I can remember the cowmen use to come over from the Limbo Ranch. The ones we liked, I think my brother an' I would—we'd just be a pest to talk to them. The ones we didn't like—an' they never did anything to us It's just childlike whatever—desires or somethin'. But the ones we didn't like; we'd just disappear. We'd go over an' play in the blacksmith's shop or something. I imagine they were happy about that. laughter Lookin' back on it I feel sorry for the ones we liked. 'Cause we'd want to tell them all the things we' done, an all the things that we— an' they would listen to us kids when they probably wanted to talk to my father and mother.

[Do I remember anyone in particular?] Oh, I 'member Al Perry, he was one of our favorites, which was his hard luck. It's funny lookin' back, it's hard to remember the names of the different ones that came.

It was about, oh, I don't know what it was, I guess, ten, twelve miles from where we lived. You had to go down on the desert, an' go around to this place, it was called Jenny Creek. It was a sheep camp an' they had a house there, a cookhouse an' things. You could drive up there with a buggy. An' one New Years Day we were— the cowpunchers an' shepherders

that were stationed around there—invited us to come over. It was snowing an' I wanted to go in the worst way. 'Cause I always wanted to go. An' anyhow, I guess I went an' made life so miserable for my parents that they decided they'd start out anyhow. Now starting out you were just in a open buckboard is what it was. You just had to wrap up the best you can an' the snow came down on top o' you. When we got over to Jenny Creek they'd about given us up. Figured that since it was storming we weren't comin'.

An' they had a real nice meal prepared, roast mutton an' everything that you could make that was real nice. But they also had a bottle of whiskey out in the shed somewhere. An' they had some kittens. Well, of course when the kittens saw us they just took off. So we wanted to play with the kittens, an' Al Perry, he would go out an' get the cats and bring 'em in to us. Everytime he'd go out to get the cats he'd have a little nip, an' so he was gettin' pretty happy by the time the day wore on.

Well, any how, after dinner an' everything, why, my Dad says, "I think we'd better start for home." Because it's a long journey when you're just goin' that way an' in the storm. The storm had kinda let up, so it wasn't so bad comin' home as it was... But they had made everybody swear that they'd stay sober until after we were gone, but poor ol' Al, he was kinda breakin' the rule of the game. Of course, the more that he hit the bottle the nicer he was to us kids, an' laughter we were havin' a fine time.

Oh, once in a while in the summertime we'd go over to Jenny Creek, 'cause it had a creek runnin' down there an' lots of cottonwood trees. An' Dad would make us a swing in the trees. Right where we lived there was no big trees; it was just the juniper.

Well, Mother sewed for—made her clothes an' my clothes. 'Cause I never remember

having anything that was bought in the store, you know, in the way of a dress or anything like that. Of course, my brother, he wore overalls, but she used to make pants out of men's pants too, for 'im. Little boys in those days wore those little short pants that look so funny nowadays. But that's what they wore and long black stockin's. Horrors! Oh, we all had long black stockin's an' kind of a harness thing that held them up. Of course, it never did too good a job, so they were always wrinkled down around your ankles.

Dad planted a garden an' sometimes when the herds of sheep would go through There'd be a weak one that couldn't keep up with the herd or somethin' an' it'd stay behind an' my Dad'd get it. Onetime he got a ewe sheep an' I don't know what was with it. She was lame? I can't remember why she wasn't with the herd but any way, in due course she had twin lambs. One was Nanny and one was Billie. They use to be our—we'd play with them. An' then sometimes you'd have several sheep. You'd, of course, have to haul the hay out there with the one horse, so you couldn't, you know, feed too many things like that.

Well juniper was pretty thick around there that is, you know, how juniper is out through the hills here. [Gesturing] toward mountain range east of Reno. Well, that's the way it was around up there. Of course, there was places where the juniper was thicker, an' that's what he went an' cut an' what we burned in the wintertime. In the summertime, why, you were busy gettin' in wood for the wintertime. Course, these claims that the company had around there— he had to do the assessment work on. What do I mean by assessment work?] Well, as I understand it, in those days, I don't know how it is now, but you had to do a hundred dollars worth of work on a mining claim every year in order to keep the mining claim.

Well, a hundred dollars worth of work in those days they considered—what was it—a shaft, I think, four by six by ten feet deep, somethin' like that. That's what he use to dig, of' course, this was all dug by hand. He dug it with a pick an' a shovel. You threw the dirt out as long as you could: an then when you couldn't you loaded up a bucket; an' then you climbed out; and pulled the bucket up; an' dumped the dirt; an' went back down an' got another. That's what they had to show, if the inspector came out, was that this assessment work had been done on each one of these claims.

I don't know how big a claim is or anything, except that there was a claim named after Alfred, my brother, an' there was one named after me. Then they had other claims they called the Selenite an' different names like that. An' that's what he my father did.

Then he raised this garden a' things to claim the water right from the five springs that were up in the mountains above us. They put in redwood tanks and piped the water down. It was kind of a primitive place to live, but we were very comfortable there as far as—except we were just isolated.

An' then Dad had this tunnel That he dug up there. It was in rock, it wasn't in gypsum, though I don't know why he was diggin' in there for. He had quite a long tunnel an' he used to drill in there an' then set off these blasts. There was a cap an' a fuse. We'd play around there. An' when he'd go to—what they called.-spit the fuse. They'd light the fuse an' they'd make the fuses different lengths. So when you got outside the tunnel you could count your blasts that'd go off. So you'd know there wasn't one in there that didn't go off. 'Cause that was the real danger, you know, one wouldn't go off. You'd go in there an' then it'd decide to go off about the time you'd got in there. But, I don't know why he was diggin' that tunnel. I guess just to be doin' something.

Limbo Ranch was four miles over the mountains an' that belonged to Richard Cowles an' that's where the cowpunchers use in come from all the time. Jenny Creek belonged to at one time, to the Flanigans, they were sheep people up there. Then I think Flanigan went broke an' the bank took it over. It belonged, I think, to the Wingfield Bank. It was kind of a headquarters for—they stored stuff there. Then their camp tenders would, when the sheep were grazing, they would go there and get supplies an' take 'em to the sheepherders out where the sheep was. There was a lot of white sage down on the desert sort of, an' o' course that was good reed for the sheep.

An' the horse we had, in the summertime, you just turned her loose, an' she went up an' got her own feed— ate the grass that was under the sagebrush an' stuff. Then every night she'd come down and get some grain. Funny how they do. She use to come every night down to the fence an' get grain.

[What about Richard Cowles an' the Limbo Ranch?] Well, of course, we were neighbors over there even though you were five or six miles apart over a steep hill. An' or course, Mr. Cowles was a very nice man, an' like I say they use to send over a quarter of beef whenever they'd butcher.

The men would come and get their mail. Dad would go to town an' then he'd get mail for all the men that were over to the ranch. Sometimes there would be quite a few an' at roundup time an' things like that. At other times, maybe, there would only be two or three. Well, we were just kind of a link to town. Because Dad went regularly to town on Saturday.

I don't know how many head of cattle or anything. 'Cause one summer Mrs. Cowles came out to the ranch an' stayed an' invited Mother an' us two kids over there. I guess we

were over there a week because it was quite a ways around by the road. If you walked or rode horseback over the mountain it was only about four, five miles. But around through Jenny Creek it must've been around twenty miles an' maybe more. Anyhow, they came over with a team an' got us kids and my mother. Dad, he'd come once in a while—hike over the mountain, but he had to stay an' kinda watch the homestead there.

I can remember havin' a real good time that year. We watched 'em make hair ropes which I guess, is a lost art now. You made 'em out of horses, the hair out of the horses's tails with kind of a little wooden thing that, oh, kind of spindle-like. They'd swing it around an' somebody would feed the hair into this—it'd start about this [gesturing] an' then they'd keep feedin' in. Oh, they'd make ropes fifteen, twenty feet long. Some of 'em were real pretty 'cause some of the horses hair'd be brown an' some white, some black. Of course it was the idea that when you slept out on the ground an' you put a horsehair rope around the bed, why, the rattlesnakes wouldn't crawl over this horse hair. Maybe it was true because they were kind of, oh, sticky and rough. You know, the ends of the hair would stick out an' so maybe the ol' snake wouldn't crawl over it. But that's what they figured anyway.

[Did they use them for anything else?] Well, they were generally more or less of an ornament 'cause the riding horses weren't tied. You know, they just dropped the reins over their head an' that tied them up. But they always carried them rolled up on the saddle because they were decorative more than anything else. Though, if you wanted to tether an animal or somethin' they were a good rope.

For roping or anything, they always used the rawhide ropes—made of rawhide. [Did they make those themselves?] Well, that I

guess, was more of an art than just makin' a horsehair rope. I remember them having 'em, but they'd have to cure the rawhide an' everything, then it was braided square. So it must have been probably, the injuns down on the Pyramid Reservation made 'em, I don't.... They used to make bridles an' oh, an' quirts an' roping—ropes out of 'em, lariats they were called.

Well, much of the things you had then were handmade, of course, harnesses and things—a harness maker was a real trade. I don't know of anybody around in that country that made harnesses or even saddles. I know in Elko, there was somebody there by the name of Garcia That made saddles; but down in Gerlach country, I never heard of anybody that made saddles there.

Then if you wanted anything like shoes an' well, clothing of any kind, you ordered it out of Montgomery Ward or Sears and Roebuck's catalog. 'Cause that's where we got most of our education was out of them. When they would come, you could study 'em from front to back an' see all the things that people had.

Father was on salary there with the Portland Cement Company because that was their main object was to take up these mining claims on the gypsum an' to corner the water right. There was five springs up in this area and as I remember, vaguely, in order to hold the water—you could file on the mining claims, but in order to hold the water you had to produce evidence that you were using the water for domestic or purposes like that. So they developed these springs—put in reservoirs or whatever you want to call them, out or redwood, great big redwood planks. Then they piped the water down to where the house was.

He had a little field of alfalfa, I don't know, maybe around the house it wouldn't be more than an acre. But he had some in alfalfa an'

then he had a garden and trees and a few things around there like that. But of course, this country up there, you know, the sheep an' cattle ran all over it and the water was a real, well, a real asset to have. But they'd never took up the water rights or whatever you'd have to do to get 'em. But the company didn't fence in the springs or anything; in fact they developed 'em an' put in troughs so that the animals that came by would have a place to drink. That was the prime reason, I think, that an' to do the assessment work on these claims was the reason my Dad was up there.

[What was his salary?] Well, it seems to me at one time it was a hundred and fifty dollars a month when we went up there first. Then it got cut down to a hundred, and Mother wasn't very happy about that. Now, when this all happened, I don't know, toward the end; I guess they figured they'd cinched their water right or somethin'. That doesn't seem like much nowadays, but in those days...An, of course, outside of your food, an' your clothing everything else, the heat an' everything was free that you went out an' got yourself. No house rent, no water, no taxes, just go an chop down some wood—enough to keep you warm all winter. Then in those days wages weren't very high anyway.

[What kind of a relationship did my father have with the officials from Pacific Portland Cement Company?] Oh, as I remember it, these men were very nice when they'd come up. You know, we were use to the cowboys an' the shepherders an' everything. Well, you couldn't say they were dressed up or anything; they were just dressed in rough working clothes all the time. These men [company officials] would come up all dressed up in suits an' everything, and all shaved an' haircuts. We thought they were, well, just out of this world really. Of course, they were always pleasant to us kids, though they were,

were real company an' so we got out o' sight as much as we could. But as far as Dad, they were always, you know pleasant to him. Of course, I suppose they were out on an inspection tour, but it wouldn't entail very much hikin' around. They weren't that rugged a mountain type.

I know this Mr. Henderson, he was rather a stoutish person, as I remember it. To us he looked young—to me he did—I don't know that Al paid any attention to him, you know. But he looked young, an' I remember my mother and dad talkin' said, Well, you know Henderson must been around about forty-five." I thought, Oh! No!, he couldn't be that old, you know, cause the ones we knew that were that old, you know, had beards an looked [laughter] ancient. He hadn't spent much time in the open, that was for sure.

Were you comparing a weathered look with age?

I imagine, looking back, you know, these men that we knew had spent all their time in the open—their skin was dark. Most of 'em didn't have long beards. Sometimes they'd have some whiskers three or four days old or maybe a week, but as a rule they didn't wear beards. Mother use to cut their hair a lot, an' they'd cut each other's hair so they didn't wear long hair. Sometimes, I guess, it wasn't the best hair cut in the world but that's what they did.

An' I can remember Mother and Dad, these men would want a suit of clothes, an' they would have some charts or somethin'—why I suppose, to some tailor place where they had 'em tailored made. But Mother and Dad would take the measurements, an then they would send in these measurements. Then would come the clothes. Everybody always seemed to be pleased with them, but they were just made from these measurements. Jerry used to do that even when he was in the mines an' things. I suppose, maybe,

they got a little commission, I don't really know anything about that. I suppose, sending into these tailor places. But I know Al Perry, they got him a brown suit onetime. Of course, when it came he had to try it on an' everything, an' oh, we though he looked pretty nifty!

Lookin' back, I don't know how old a man Al Perry [would] have been. Probably fifty-five maybe in that area. I don't think they were, you know, they weren't real old men. He was the foreman for Dick Cowles at the Cowles's Ranch, the Limbo Ranch. I don't know how many head of cattle they ran up there, but they used to have, you know, roundups in the fall. I guess they must've drove them to Wadsworth, 'cause they never came though our place goin' to Gerlach to be shipped out.

Over to this Jenny Creek place, they sheared the sheep. Then there would be the big wagon loads with these great big wool sacks on 'em goin' down the desert road there, with four to six horses on 'em an' loaded with wool. They would go to Gerlach to ship the wool, but I never remember the cattle being' driven that way. I just don't know where the cattle went. Never thought much about it, I guess. But they probably came to Wadsworth someway or another.

[Did Mr. Cowles have property in Wadsworth?] Oh, yeah, they had a place in Wadsworth an' a place here in Reno, and they had the ranch out there. His sons were oh, I guess, at that time, twenty—Irvig and Dick Cowles. An' I remember they use to send things at Christmas time, Mrs. Cowles did. They came from the family, but then I think Mrs. Cowles had... But they sent me the most beautiful dolls. One was a baby doll—I think Lida [my daughter] still has that, you know with all the clothes made for it. Oh, it was just perfects Then there was a beautiful doll: she was about, oh, I guess, two feet—about eighteen inches, I guess, all dressed in the prettiest white dress with pink

ribbons on it. Things for my brother that use to come in an apple box. When we got the package from Cowles we was really living!

He [Mr. Cowles] was state senator here for several terms, oh, aroun' 1920, he was senator from Washoe County. I don't remember him too much; you know, we saw more of Mr. Perry than we saw of Dick Cowles. But he was the, well, owner of the ranch. She was a very nice lady. Their daughter was married to Melvin Jeppson afterward, he was a district attorney here.

[What was the educational level of people like Al Perry?] Well, if he couldn't read or write, I doubt that he had much education. I don't know where he came from, you know, or anything like that. [Could he read and write?] He could write Al Perry that was all. Of course us kids were cautioned never to, you know, say anything that would be embarrassing in anyway. You know, they didn't want people to know that they couldn't read or write. You sometimes think, well why didn't they learn, you know, why didn't they get somebody to teach 'em? But by the time you worked from five in the morning 'til dark at night you'd run out of ambition.

Could the other cowpunchers read an' write? Oh, most of 'em could, I'm sure they could. I don't recall anybody that couldn't. They must have all had some education. Of course in those days if you had an eighth grade education or even went through four or five grades to learn to read an' write, you had all the education you needed to get by with, because it was just plain hard work. If you could ride a horse, or if you could, you know, load on wood or could dig a hole, why, you made a living.

* * * * *

It must have been kind of lonesome for Mother after we lost my brother, my half

brother[Maurice Downey Bronson]. You look back down through the years, as kids I don't think we were much affected by losing him. Because he had been away to school a good share of the time in Fallon, and so he wasn't around. Then in the summer he'd get a job somewhere an' work, so he wasn't around too much. After he disappeared, why, it must have been very lonesome for Mom. 'Cause you didn't know for eight years whether he was alive or dead so...

I can remember he had a job in the roundhouse in Gerlach. I don't know what the trouble was or anything. He got into an argument, I guess, with the foreman. The foreman was goin' to well, knock his block off or something An' Koot was very athletic; and he ran toward the fence: an' the foreman thought he had him. He just [Koot] put his hand on the post an' over the fence he went—then came home. [laughter] That was the end of that jobs So that was a sort of a, well, traumatic experience. [Was this a source of conflict between my father and Koot?] Well, a source of conflict, I imagine between my Mother and Father too.

All these things are kind of hazy in my mind. It's just your impressions. But I know after he was lost, you had to, well, you just rode all over this country looking for him. Men walked; arid men rode horseback. You could follow his tracks for a couple of miles, then a band of sheep had gone across. An' you never could pick 'em up after that— never could pick 'em up, because you had no idea which way he was going. Because he was gone about twenty-four hours before they'd realized he was lost. He didn't come home and of course, my mother was very anxious. Dad says, "Oh, I'm sure he has gone over to Limbo; he's over there with Al Perry." An the next day, oh, in the early afternoon, why, Al Perry came ridin' up on his horse. My mother rushed out an'

says, "Where's Koot?" He says, "Why I don't know Mrs. Swesey. I haven't seen him." Of course then the tragic thing hit.

My father had been down hauling some wood an' he was comin' up with the load. So then—you could track people— you could see where he left home, he had his gun, an' was goin huntin'. Evidently instead of going toward Limbo he headed out across the desert below the house there. By the time that they had tracked him and figured out which way he was going, why, the sheep had gone through. Of course, a band of sheep just, you know, their little footprints just knocked out all footprints. They never could pick up the trail on the other side, no matter how people looked.

He evidently, must have been killed that day from when they did find what was left—the gun, an' the shoes. He must've been killed that day not too long, I guess, after he left home. Because he wasn't so very far from home in a matter of miles, maybe five or six miles. But that's such a vast country an' when you don't know where or which way somebody went, why...

Because he was always goin' huntin', you know, a kid seventeen years old an' all kinds of jack rabbits an' things to shoot at. For my poor mother that was a very sad time, but we stayed there three years after that. I don't remember— Mother didn't make our life unhappy on account of it, that I remember.

Because I can remember, we were up on the hill herding sheep, that is we had this old ewe that had the two lambs an' then we had two or three other sheep. You couldn't let 'em go by themselves because the coyotes would get 'em. So us kids, that was our job, we had to go follow these sheep around while they were grazing. We were, oh, maybe four, five hundred yards I guess, from home up on the side of the hill. When I heard a pistol shot. It—I don't know—it just frightened

the soul out of me. An' we left the sheep and dashed down the hill to the house. An' my mother was standing with the pistol in her hand an' she said she was just practicing shooting. Looking back on it, I think my mother intended to commit suicide. I think that was it. An' it probably frightened her as much as it did us. So she must have been very depressed. She couldn't help but be. [How long after Koot's disappearance was this?] Maybe a year. It was in the summertime so... It must've been, Wasn't that summer [following his disappearance] because that summer everybody was looking for him.

There was a man by the name of Carlscadden, he was the foreman of the sheep outfit there. He an' my folks, of course, were very good friends; an' they had looked and looked and looked when Koot was lost. Then we moved to Reno and eight years later he wrote a letter to my father. He said that he had found, that one of his shearers had found this skeleton with the gun and the shoes, an' he felt in his own mind that it was my brother.

So my Uncle Jerry went up there. I don't know too many of the details or anything. This must've been along about 1920, I guess, in that area somewhere, 1920 or 1921. Anyhow, they shipped the remains back here, and it's buried up in Mountain View Cemetery. Now, how you went about doing that without, you know, how he went about doin' some—burying somebody without the authorities havin' their hand in it, I don't know. That's—my mind is blank there.

But Mother remembered the dental work that Koot had done, an' it was his gun. An' that of course, was the only means of identification that we had. Then you knew that's the direction he'd gone in, from these tracks—where they tracked him to the edge of where the band of sheep had gone by. But

you know, how he died; or how long he was alive; we know nothing. Whether he died of thirst or whether he— you know. There was never any investigation that I know of. I don't know how it was handled.

[What were the theories?] Well, some of the theories was that he'd, I guess, he was by a rock or somethin' and that he'd crawled over this rock probably after something and dragged the gun an' it had gone off. But you know, I just—that's all I know about that.

[Was there any discussion regarding the wounds or remains?] No, no, no, I don't know, you know, whether he was just wounded an' couldn't go, an' died of thirst, or starved to death, you don't know. After eight years you don't—there isn't much left of anything.

That was kind of a traumatic experience for my mother too. Because, I know, when all the boys were goin' off to war after we moved to Reno an' we'd go down to watch the troop trains going—Mother was always looking for him. Because, of course, we never knew whether he was dead or alive. An' in a case like that, you can always find somebody that has seen somebody somewhere. Because I know somebody up in Ravendale said that a young fellow came through there that had brain fever, whatever brain fever was. My Dad sent some money up to em' to send Koot home. It was just a hoax—is all it was. Because, of course, the theory was that he had ran away from home. While there was dissension between him and my Dad, I don't think it was ever that serious.

The uncertainty of knowing whether or not my brother was alive was one of the worse. Because at the time they were hunting for him somebody said to my mother. One of the men that was looking says, "Oh! Mrs. Swesey, if we find him what will we do?" She said, "If you find him, you tell me." [tearful voice] "It's not knowing that's what's killin' me."

Well, you can imagine, you know, I mean, these were just people doin' the best they could for you. But my father hired men to hunt for a long time, and it cost a lot of money, an' sort of broke down my father's health. He was never very well after that.

I think now he must o' had stomach ulcers, you know. I suppose that's what it was. He went up to Spokane to the doctor up there.

Spokane was a long ways to go.

There was a Dr. Richter up in Spokane that my father had faith in an' he had little faith in any doctor. He had these problems an' I think it all started from the stress, well, the domestic stress that went on. Because, after all he was the stepfather. You look from a mature point of view, there must've been problems there. There couldn't have helped but have been problems.

Anyhow, I know my father took sick, he didn't feel a bit good. He got very thin. Anyhow, he went up, he wanted to go see Dr. Richter an' he went to Spokane. The doctor gave him medicine and stuff which he took for quite a few years. Just thinkin' about it, I think he must've probably developed an' ulcer. Because he was workin'. I mean he was still haulin' wood and diggin' holes an' things, but he wasn't very well. So people had their problems then too. They sorta stayed together with their problems then, an' now they just—one slides one way an' one the other.

[What made me think it was an ulcer?] Well, he complained of his stomach, an then when he came back from Spokane he had this, oh, cream colored lookin' medicine in bottles, an' then some kind of pills he took, I guess, for pain, so. He'd lost weight an' Grandpa didn't look a bit good, an I had a picture of him. He didn't look a bit good.

I suppose in that way, the fact that he had reacted to the tragic—in this manner, probably helped my mother. In that she became concerned over him an' forgot, or not forgot, you don't forget, but sort of pushed back her own grief an' depression. You had to keep on living' there wasn't any other way out of it.

It was a sad time, you know as a youngster, I guess, you kind of get a wall around you an' live in your own little shell. 'Cause I don't know if Al ever remembers any of this, or if it ever occurs to him. But what you can't do anything about, I guess, you kinda shut off in your mind as best you can.

Through that period I don't remember that us youngsters were unhappy. They were not cross or crabby with us. I remember my dad made me a doll bed. Looking back on it now, with just a saw, an' a hammer, an' a square with all the little rods up and down the foot an head set in with a knife. They must've buried their troubles one-way or another or coped with 'em the best they knew how. But I suppose that's what took the toll of my dad. Then I guess, maybe that was one reason they finally decided to leave up there and come down here.

* * * * *

Then one winter Al and I went to school in Gerlach. Dad went down an' built a little house down there, just on the railroad grounds. You just decided you were going to build in this spot and then you built. It was just a little one room—room for my brother and a cookstove in it and things. Then they put a little shed out in the back of it. We lived in there one winter before we came down to Reno.

Went to the one room school and there was five. [children] I was the only girl and

there was four other boys, my brother and two Hutchinson boys Pat and Alton and a boy by the name of Leo Riordan.

Was there a relationship between the Riordan that was hurt on the diamond drill and Leo?

No, no, there was no relationship. The Riordan we went to school with, his father worked for the railroad in Gerlach. There wasn't any relationship between them at all.

The school was just heated with a stove, you know. The boys packed in the wood and they built a fire and that was the way we had heat. I guess, the teacher had taken the ashes out of the stove in a paper box and set 'em on the back step of the little school house, and pretty soon here comes smoke up though the floor. That was another Roman holiday for all the kids. Because school was kinda of in town, but the main part of town was about, maybe, a block or so away. "Run up town and yell Fire!" Of course, kids, why, we had more fun. We were runnin' and yellin', "Fire! Fire! The school house is on Fire!" Men came from far and near with axes and what not. Of course, the water—we just packed water in a bucket to drink—probably, a block or better. One poor guy he came jumping over the sagebrush with a big wash boiler, but no water in it. Then the men they chopped a hole in the floor. They chopped it around and they got it out. Then they had to repair the school house again.

[Who was the teacher?] Her name was Madeline Horgan, and she was always good to us kids. She seemed old to me, but she wasn't so very old. Teachers have always seemed old to kids, I guess. How would I describe her? Well, I use to think she was a real pretty girl or woman. She always wore neat clothes and everything.

[Why was she in Gerlach teaching school?] Well, that's the way girls made a livin'

in those days, you know, if you wanted to teach in a city school you had to have an inside track of some kind. But then they went out to these little outlying schools. 'Cause if there was five children you could have a school for some reason or another, I guess the state put up the money. I don't know just how they got the money for the schools. I guess, through the state education Lund or something.

There were just five students that winter?

That winter that we were there that's all there was, but that was every grade. 'Cause my brother was younger and Leo Riordan was younger than him. So she was teaching all four grades, an' I suppose we must've learned somethin'. If we didn't learn it there I don't know where.

Mother had taught us for a while—taught us to read and write and then, I guess they decided it was time that we came down and got into civilization.

Meaning Gerlach?

No, down here to Reno.

What brought about the decision to go into school in Gerlach?

I don't really know. No, Gerlach had a school, but I just really don't know. Maybe Mother felt that she taught as much as she was... Maybe they felt that we should go to school with other children. I really don't know. I just... I don't remember too much discussion about it. I don't remember anything about that except that's where we went that one winter.

An' Granpa he stayed there—out at the mine—and then he'd come and get us Friday. He'd come into town Friday and then we'd go out and come back Sunday afternoon. Because

we used to, you know, I don't know how long it would take you to go thirteen miles with a buggy and a horse. Four miles an hour would be three hours, wouldn't it? It'd take at least three hours. 'Cause goin' back out to the mine it was all uphill. Because my mother and us two kids in the buggy, and Dad would get out and walk so it would be lighter for the horse. When we'd get back there it would be dark, and I always liked the lamp light. I always liked to eat by coal oil lamp light.

[What do I recall of Gerlach that winter?] Oh, I just remember going to school an' of course in those days every holiday or somethin', why, the school children put on.... What would you say—said speeches, sort of an entertainment an' things. An' then at Christmas time we had a community Christmas tree.

[Do I remember what the town looked like?] Well, it had a depot, an' of course just dirt roads, this way an' that way. The main road went up sorta parallel to the railroad track. An' then there was a Dalton's store on one side with the Post Office in Dalton's store. An' across the street was Mrs. King's saloon. Then further up the street was a place of mystery that us children were never, well, clued into what was there. But now—it was a bawdy house [Moffat ran it, and I'm unsure of spellings]. Let me see, what else. An of course it had a depot by the railroad track an' a roundhouse. There was a roundhouse there. An as a youngster I never could see why the engine was put in the roundhouse an' the cars were left out in a storm. That always puzzled me. Then just a few scattered shacks they were. I guess, you couldn't really call 'em houses.

I don't imagine there was more than, oh, thirty-, five or forty people livin' there at the time. [Were there families?] Some. There's a Riordan family an' then there was the people that were at the section house. I don't

remember what their name was. They had a little girl, but she wasn't old enough to go to school. An' then, of course, there was the telegraph operator an' his family. I believe, if I remember right they lived in the, well, it was kind of a hotel that went with the depot—the depot hotel like. An' there was a pump out close to the road, an' you packed the water from the pump. Now, why we pumped the water for domestic purposes when they had the big tank for the railroad, that I don't know. Maybe it was better water.

When you said thirty-five or forty people that means bodies, not thirty-five or forty families?

No, just people. Well, it wasn't a very big place. After all there was only five kids in school. I think it would stretch it to say there was fifty. There wasn't that many people there, you know. The ranchers and sheepherders an' things came in an' out, but they didn't live in Gerlach.

[What do I recall about the railroad?] Well, I imagine there must've been a good many trains going through, 'cause it was the main line on the Western Pacific. [Did the train stop there for servicing?] Oh, yes, it was the division point or roundhouse or whatever you call it.

But I do remember they unloaded three carloads of pigs in the stockyards. Oh! Heavens! Us kids with nothin' else to do went down. An the pigs were sleepin' around. An' we'd jump off the fence on top of a pig, an'... Well, we didn't last very long, but you had quite a ride while you was on the pig. Then I suppose he must've been the one that was traveling with the pigs or whatever it was. He came an' "You get outa here! No toucha the pig!" An' he chased us out. But Gee! It's a wonder we didn't—somethin' bad didn't happen. When my folks found out what we'd

been doin' we really got a lecture. But it was all over then.

Just you and Al?

An' the other kids, the other three kids in school. [laughter]

[Did the passenger trains stop there?]
Yeah, I'm sure, oh, yes, I know they stopped there. I don't think they stopped to eat there. I think the train crews were changed an' that was all. Not on the passenger trains, I think just the freight train crews were changed there. When you look back that far you can't remember too much about the railroad except that it was a fascinating thing that went away off into the distance where ever anything interesting would happen. And that's about all I know about it.

They used to have little plays there in the school. Everybody made their own entertainment in those days. Then, I guess we came to Reno.

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